



Economic Affairs Scrutiny Panel

Retail Policy

THURSDAY, 13th MARCH 2014

Panel:

Deputy S.G. Luce of St. Martin (Chairman)
Connétable S.W. Pallett of St. Brelade
Connétable M.J. Paddock of St. Ouen
Connétable J.E. Le Maistre of Grouville

Witnesses:

Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier
Town Centre Manager

[9:01]

Deputy S.G. Luce of St. Martin (Chairman):

Welcome to our Scrutiny hearing. For the benefit of the tape and just to get the details out of the way, electronic devices on quiet, if possible, and if you are leaving the room, do that quietly, as much as you can. If we could just go around the table so that we can identify ourselves. Deputy Steve Luce, Chairman of the panel.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Thank you. That is all those details out of the way. Constable and Richard, thank you very much for your submission. Retail is obviously a real buzzword at the moment, lots going on, lots of ideas and initiatives and there is lots to discuss. Could I start off by asking your views on a suggestion which has come out of a number of places recently, not least the seminar that E.D. (Economic Development) held, which was that we need a champion for this industry on the Island. Could I ask you for your views on that and if you agree with the concept whether that person should come from the political sphere or commercial sphere?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Richard and I were both at the workshop and we sort of fed into that suggestion, so we are clearly supportive of it, and most of the other things that came out of the workshop. I take my hat off to E.D. for getting proactively into this and dedicating officer time to the strategy, the consultation and the promise of funding. I think a retail champion makes a lot of sense. Personally, I do not think it should be a politician, I think it should be a dedicated officer that can do the kind of banging together of heads, pulling down of silos that is necessary to get a much more co-ordinated approach to retail in St. Helier than currently exists between various States departments.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Do you think that officer would have to be within the Civil Service?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Not necessarily. Jersey Business was at the seminar and I have read their submission to you. They are very keen on getting involved, possibly taking the town centre management function under their wing, so I think Jersey Business might well be a good independent arm's length place for that champion to work from.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Do you think the champion, if they were based at Jersey Business, would have enough clout politically? Would they be able to open the doors that a politician would?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

I think the political support, as with anything, as with tourism, as with agriculture, as with health, there will be States Members who get behind these particular initiatives. I have certainly been banging the drum for retail in St. Helier, I have been trying to stop the spread of retail out of town. For example, successive Island Plan debates, all St. Helier representatives have stressed the need to focus. Any new supermarket, for example, should be in the town, it should not be out in the countryside, because we want to keep the vibrancy in the retail heart. I think political

champions do their work, and I do not know that ... they could be co-opted, but possibly that is not ... it is not a die in a ditch for me.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

No.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

I just think there will be politicians who want to fight for keeping retail healthy and there will be those who are less interested.

Town Centre Manager:

Can I come in on that, because as someone who came from the private sector, you come in and it is fine if you have the knowledge, but you do have to have the in with the politicians, and I do not believe you can have one without the other. I think you might even have to put a plural in front of that now, retail champions. I think your retail champion would have to have a very close relationship with a politician, because without that, nothing would get done. But I think it is vital that they do have the retail knowledge, because then they will have the credibility with the people they are working with, but there is probably no one that has got both, and you would need both as a partnership. I find in my job if I did not have the Constable's support, I could not do half of what I want to do.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

We are going to move to the next obvious stage from that, which is strategy. You say in your submission we need a 5, 10, 20-year strategy, but could I just go back even more short term than that at the moment? Do you feel we have got a strategy at the moment? Do you feel we are desperately lacking in a strategy? I am not trying to put words into your mouth, but where do you think we are with strategy as regards retail?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

If I can speak from the point of view of the Parish, because that is the sort of retail strategy that I am in charge of, working through Richard there is a very clear strategy and a number of key strands. One is supporting retail, particularly small retailers, catalysing trader groups. We now have 7 trader groups working in town, which they tend to meet half an hour before the shops open, and they are in areas like Colomberie, Don Street, Conway Street, Market Street, West's Centre, and these are basically groups of retailers who want help from the Parish, and through us, from the States, in making things happen in their districts. That is certainly a key part of our role with retail is supporting retail, in cutting through red tape, getting permission, for example, to have a West's Centre Easter fête, which they are having this year - Colomberie do things as well -

branding initiatives, difficulties they have with traffic and parking we can then take forward to the States and to the Ministers. Other aspects I have mentioned already, that the Parish has consistently, certainly for the last 12.5 years, worked to support retail by campaigning for greater shopper parking. Richard has done a lot of work about trying to make parking easier, trying to make it cheaper, trying to incentivise people to come to town and so on. We are starting to see the fruits of that now. A year ago I went to meetings where people's eyes glazed over when we said we thought parking was important. In fact, senior politicians said they did not think that easier parking was that important to getting retail to work. A year on we have the Minister for Economic Development being prepared to commit funding to find ways of incentivising people to come in. For example, at 3.00 p.m. in the afternoon they can park for free, go shopping and then perhaps go to a restaurant. So these are the kind of strategic things we are doing in town to support retail.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Apart from strategic things, in terms of the Parish itself, obviously cost to business is very important. Is there any way you have been looking at trying to assist business? I am thinking of something like through the rates system or anything like that to ease their costs. The other one I suppose is have you looked or have you considered any way to try to coerce empty shop owners to make their shops more available?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Yes. Richard has worked to achieve the current situation, which you may be aware of. We have the lowest number of shop vacancies in 5 years, a fifth of the level of the U.K. (United Kingdom). I think it is 3 per cent, is it not?

Town Centre Manager:

Yes, we have 3 per cent.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

3 per cent empty shops. We work directly with landlords. If there is an empty shop doing nothing, Richard will go along to the landlord: "Can we put an artist in there? Can we put somebody in there who has got paintings to sell? Can we put a charity in there for 2 weeks?" and so pop-up shops have been happening quite a lot in St. Helier. So we do work on the empty shop ...

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Do you assist in terms of rates for them?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Absolutely. The Parish will meet the rates... and that is one of the things we say to the landlord: "If you let us have this shop for a given use, we will cover the rates, we will keep the windows clean, we will pay the electricity and so on" and these are not big costs, and it means that that shop can be opened and can be doing something useful.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

So adding to the experience of shopping in town?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Absolutely.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Is that the way you are looking at it?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Yes.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

How would you feel about, going the other way, if the landlord was unco-operative? How would you feel, for example, about saying: "Well, if you refuse to do anything and you want to keep it boarded up, we are going to increase your rates"?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

That would be difficult legally. Thinking outside the box, we did have a couple of landlords that were not willing to play ball, they were not willing to improve the look of their empty units, so we came up with the idea of putting things outside their shop windows, so in some cases we put planters, which we have kept attractive, other cases we had displays of town history and poetry, again using the shop front from the outside so that it does not provide that kind of visual blot on the landscape. But we do not have the legal power to reduce rates for businesses. What we have done recently is frozen the cost of alfresco, so people who pay to do things outside their shop have had that those rates frozen, certainly for the last year.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

A lot has been mentioned about the experience of shopping in town. What else do you think you can add to certainly the Parish or strategically you can add to town to bring shoppers in? For example, also on a Sunday, when obviously there is a big question mark over Sunday trading at

the moment, what else do you think the Parish could add to that experience? Entertainment has been mentioned on a Sunday and things like that. Is that something you support?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Absolutely. Last year we had a very successful street party organised over Saturday and Sunday. In fact, that was Deputy Richard Rondel's brainchild. That was so successful that we are now looking at a regular Sunday market, April through to October, either in Broad Street, where the market was last year, or in Halkett Place along the market which is currently closed. Either of those streets we are currently consulting T.T.S. (Transport and Technical Services) about, and either of those streets would lend themselves to an open-air market. Then, interestingly, on the Sunday trading thing, it would do 2 things. It would provide the incentive for the French tourists in particular who come on a Sunday and find a disappointing retail offer. If you had a regular Sunday market that the French knew about, then that would certainly provide a big draw for them. Interestingly, one of the arguments we have been given against our Sunday market proposal is that if Sunday trading comes in, it will make it more difficult. For me, that is another reason to oppose greater Sunday trading, because I do not want to see the idea of a Sunday street market knocked on the head because people want to run Sunday as a normal working day.

The Connétable of St. Ouen:

You raised the Sunday trading thing. How would you feel if it was agreed and this trial period went for 18 months of all shops being open, and at the end of it, it was decided that it did not work out? How do think the consumer would feel if they suddenly had that withdrawn? Do you think it would be easy to withdraw it?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

I do not think it would be easy to go back. I think it is very unlikely if this happens that it will go back. I think possibly the impact will be less on the town centre. I mean, there will be an impact on the town centre in terms of parking, congestion, extra litter, the need for more money from the Parish to pay for all that, more policing probably as well, but there will also be an effect on the outlying areas of St. Helier, the top of Queen's Road, big residential areas surrounding B&Q supermarket. If that is open as a normal day, then the residents around there, residents in Vallee Des Vaux around Waitrose, they will not get a rest day, and I think that is why it will be opposed on those grounds as well.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Have you had any feedback from smaller shops that they are concerned about the damage to their business by opening the larger stores in town and B&Q?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Can I ask Richard? Richard has been sort of fronting this.

Town Centre Manager:

Yes. At the moment, obviously there are only 10 stores in St. Helier town centre that cannot open and we have seen what the response is at this moment in time is that we have had very few shops open, so the response is immediately. The release of this restriction will obviously allow certain large stores to open and I estimate that initially about 5 stores will open probably, and this may almost force some of the smaller stores to open to protect their market share. I would say that I think initially in St. Helier the effect would be just for King and Queen Street and then that would be reviewed, and so I think we are yet to see what the total effect would be, but I would agree that you cannot go back. Once you have opened it, you have opened it. The experience in Liberty Wharf, who have been able to open on Sundays for a long time, is that it has been very strong in the summer, but probably not quite as strong in the winter, and I think a rainy February really does not encourage you to go out and do your shopping. I think one has to be aware of the restrictions on this.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Could I come in on Liberty Wharf? It is just a small point, but it is quite an important one. Liberty Wharf is hamstrung on a Sunday because the store at the end cannot open, because it is too big, and when Liberty Wharf was designed, it was supposed to be a walk-through. Particularly again going back to the French tourists coming off the boat, they are supposed to be able to come off the boat and walk through the supermarket end of Liberty Wharf and they cannot do it on a Sunday. So I think there is a good case for allowing that particular unit to open, because without it, the French experience - which is something I am very keen on promoting - is going to be frustrated.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Do you think there is a case for redesigning that shop at the west end of Liberty Wharf, because it does not feel like a walk-through ...

[9:15]

The Connétable of St. Helier:

No, it should never have ...

The Deputy of St. Martin:

... because you have to start walking through a shop.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Absolutely. You have got to go past beds and furniture. It should never have been done like that, and the original scheme - because I was on Planning when it was fought over - and the whole purpose of Liberty Wharf was to promote pedestrian accessibility to the harbours through a shopping mall and that really has not been. I think either we need to open the shop or we need to have it redesigned, yes.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Because in practical terms, there is no real reason why that M&S at the end of there could not be split in half with a glass wall either side of a walkway ...

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Yes, that would be ...

The Deputy of St. Martin:

... and the 2 shops continue to operate in the way they do at the moment.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Yes. I do not know how feasible that is with contracts and so on, but that is certainly something I would support.

Town Centre Manager:

Can I just come back on something? Sorry to interrupt, but I think we do have to review our trading hours, because at the moment, we have got to realise that there is a 30 per cent increase in internet sales year on year, and that will not go away. What we have got to be, as a retail sector, is more convenient for our customer, and I think that is the concept number one on Sunday, is to try and get away from the internet shrinkage. However, we should also maybe be looking at other shopping opportunities. If you go to certain places like Zurich, all their shops do not open until 10.00 a.m. but they close at 8.00 p.m., which allows the people that have finished working to go and do their shopping. If we continue with our current trading patterns, we are forcing people who work on to the internet, because their shopping opportunity is reduced, and I think we have got to be very aware of that. Retail has shifted over the years and it will never stay the same and it will keep moving. We have got to be aware of how we compete with our competition. At the moment, the number one competitor - and I think if you spoke to any retailer - is the internet, so we have got to be sensible about that.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Given that the only legal restriction we have at the moment is large shops on a Sunday, there is no compulsion for small, normal-sized shops in St. Helier to open or close at any particular time. How do we take the shift from 8.00 a.m. until 5.00 p.m. or 9.00 a.m. until 5.00 p.m. or what have you and move it later so we open later and stay open later?

Town Centre Manager:

The big leader of this will always be the larger units. I am currently having meetings with them and asking them to reconsider their hours. We had a meeting last week, and we have got a meeting in 2 weeks' time again, where they are going to come back to discuss this and see if their opening hours are appropriate to their customer base. When we think that the large proportion of the working people on the Island work in St. Helier and they are walking probably down King Street or up King Street to get to their mode of transport - and this would be about 5.30 p.m. - and what they are greeted by is people closing doors, it is not probably a realistic thing. I think we have to adapt it, because now it is so convenient to shop on an alternative method. We have never had anything like the internet, you can do it ... they talk about dual-screening now. Dual screening is when someone sits in front of the television and also does their shopping at the same time, and there is all these sort of things that are going on. I think, as retailers, we have got to then make sure that we are aware of this and we are there for our customers, and it is following our customers' wishes.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Can I also add to that - and it picks up on a point Steve asked earlier about promoting town as a place to shop - the thing you cannot do on the internet is meet friends, listen to live music and have a meal. The things you can do in town, particularly in the good weather, is you can socialise, you can go to one of our many pubs or cafes, you can sit in a restaurant and have a nice meal, you can listen to street theatre, you can watch street theatre or listen to music. It is those kind of activities, particularly in the early evening, that need to be promoted.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

In terms of communication with shops - I will not pick on any one shop in particular - do you think they really put across how competitive they can be with the internet, because there are shops that can compete and also offer that service, that good back-up service obviously that is part of the shopping experience?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

That is something that the retail seminar we had was looking at customer service in particular, because there are very good examples of customer service we can think of, and there are appalling ones. Again, what you cannot do on the internet, I bought some aftershave recently. I went into a big store and this really charming person took me around, explained all the different

things and ended up selling me aftershave which I could have bought much more cheaply up at the airport, but it is that kind of customer service, again the ability to take stuff back, electronic stuff back and get it fixed. Those are the strengths of going shopping.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

But we do not sell that and communicate enough of that.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Which we need to communicate more, I agree.

Town Centre Manager:

Which is part of what we are doing with E.D.D. We are looking at 2 sort of things. Number one is to make a far greater awareness on social media, and social media is a very inexpensive way of getting yourself on to the internet, because now retailing is not a mutual thing. You cannot just do it on the high street, you have got to interact with social media. You have all heard - and I have put on there - John Lewis talk about clicks and bricks, and that is a very common thing. You cannot just trade out of your brick centre, you have got to interact. By interacting with Facebook and Twitter, which are things probably some of us do not use very often, but the younger generation are almost addicted to it, you can then participate there. We are also looking at something that I am very keen on, which is a virtual high street, because if you go on there, it is very easy to click on one provider - and we will talk about Amazon, if you like - and you click on Amazon and it is there, but if you wanted to find out what was on St. Helier, you would probably have to go through all sorts of hoops to go and Google it up. If we could actually provide a virtual high street and you could click on the door of a departmental store - I will not give a name - that took you straight into that website, that would allow you to do the comparative shopping. I think you make a very valid point. The internet is not always the cheapest option, but we are not telling our customers where the best place to go is, and you have got to have that ability to communicate with them electronically as well. It is quite interesting, if you look at the latest opening we have got in West's Centre, it is someone who started on the internet is now investing in a shop front. So we have got a furniture shop that, as they say, started, MyPad, and is now opening in West's Centre so that they have got both their representations, which is a bit of a reverse thing to the normal trend, but it does show the importance of combining both of those medias for selling your goods.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I know you sounded very complimentary about E.D.D. at the start, but do you think that getting this co-ordinated has taken an awfully long time and they have been a little bit slow to react? This downturn, the decline in retail has been happening over a 5, 6-year period. It has not happened

overnight and it is only really in the last year, 18 months. I know both of you have worked hard over a longer period than that, but in terms of E.D.D., do you think they have responded quick enough?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

My view is that it is not so much E.D.D., it is the States. One of the big problems we have as a Parish - and you will know this as Constables, except the Chairman - is that we have the responsibility without the power. People come to me and say: "Why can you not do such and such?" and I say: "Because it is not a Parish road." I cannot influence the parking, I cannot influence the traffic flow. Licensing: we have to go cap in hand to various licensing authorities, masses of red tape involved in licensing events, entertainment. What we are currently looking to do, we are in discussion with the Bailiff's panel just to see if we can get delegated authority as a Parish so that we can make decisions about what events happen without having to go through this extraordinarily long and expensive process of getting a Bailiff's permit to do things. After all, I am the accountable person and I can be removed from office, the Bailiff cannot, and it seems to me that it is a far more accountable process. It will be a much cheaper and quicker process for the retailers if they can come to the Parish, or possibly their trader group will simply have the delegated power from me, and they can just get on with it and they can have events happening every weekend, early evening and so on.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

I was going to come on to red tape, but we have conveniently got there. We have some retailers that have come to us, and it will come as no surprise to you that they cite red tape as an obstacle to doing all sorts of things that they would like to do. In some cases people want to extend their retail offering on to the pavement or what have you, and they cite red tape. They do not specify whether it is parochial, whether it is Government.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

That would be parochial. Yes, that would be Parish.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

That would be parochial?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Yes. There has to be some.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Is there a justification for the amount of money you ask for red tape procedures on pavements?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Yes, there has to be some. I am currently dealing with a very disgruntled shop owner who is angry at having to pay a couple of hundred quid a year for taking an area of the pavement to themselves. There are a couple of principles here. One is that a lot of the restaurants, hospitality industry in St. Helier pay to have alfresco areas which are licensed, and that enables us to maintain good order. There are expenses involved for the Parish and clearly we have to operate fairly, so the person, the small shop who is complaining about a couple of hundred quid is paying proportionately what the ...

The Deputy of St. Martin:

But it is consistent ...

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Absolutely, yes.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

How does it work? Is it square metres, square foot or ...

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Yes, it worked out quite precisely. Sometimes I do have to step in and ease the process because it can be applied a little bit too rigidly, but another example is putting out A boards. When I took office, people were not allowed to put boards outside their shops, and I said: "That is silly, you need to be able to put out an A board, but let us find a way of licensing it so that if someone falls over it and breaks a leg, the Parish is not liable." We have got that. There is an insurance cover in place. People pay £50 a year, I think it is, to put out an A board, everybody is happy. That is the kind of red tape that you have to have to protect the Parish and in some cases to protect the public.

Town Centre Manager:

Can I move on from there, from the red tape? I was with the New Street traders last night and they had concerns about the road and the pavement and so on. There were 3 Parish officers there, yet it was a T.T.S. road, so as a consequence a lot of what they wanted to do, which we could have probably sorted out straight away, we had to consult with the T.T.S. officer - the T.T.S. officer unfortunately had to go A. and E. (Accident and Emergency) - and so we are constantly battling. I think if we have a look at the initiative that was taken 5 years ago, when cleaning was condensed, in the old days the T.T.S. cleaned the T.T.S. roads, as you know, and the Parish cleaned the Parish roads, which resulted in the cleaner picking up his brush when he got to a T.T.S. road, walking across and so on. We have stopped that and the Parish has control for

everything within the inner ring road, and I think if we were to start to be more sensible with regard to delegating responsibilities and so on, it would reduce an awful lot of red tape. They wanted to do a street party. By the time we got through that, you could see their eyes were glazing over and they were thinking: "Why did we even think about this?"

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

But that is sort of again to Simon's point about a more devolved local governance, bringing it back to the Parishes rather than allowing it to stay with the central Government.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Let us move to pedestrianisation there, because it neatly follows after. Do you see a case for extending the pedestrian zone in St. Helier?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

I tend to call it pedestrian priority, because pedestrianisation is a kind of red rag to a bull for a lot of retailers, even people who trade in King Street, some of them hark back to the days when you could drive up and down and collect your stuff, which I find quite incredible, but there are those who would like to put the clock back. Successive Island Plans have identified a cordon zone in St. Helier which would, between the hours of say 10.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m., 6.00 p.m. be pedestrianised, and then would be open to traffic. That has never been implemented, because successive Ministers for Transport and Technical Services - and I probably include myself years ago as the President of Public Services - have not been able to get that through because of the opposition not just from retailers, but from the Central Market as well. But there is no doubt that every single particularly historic town and historic tourist town in Europe that has increased pedestrianisation has seen increased activity in terms of retail, no question about it at all. If you take an area like Halkett Place, where we have a number of restaurants, Halkett Place has had quite a high level of empty shops, it has been one of the most difficult streets to animate. We have a Halkett Place traders' group and half of those traders are insistent they will not lose one parking space, which of course can presumably accommodate about 6 people in the course of the day, so you are going to get 6 people into that space, and the other half of the traders want to see that parking space turned into an alfresco dining area, which presumably will bring in tens, if not hundreds, of people into that same area, so in terms of democratising road space, there is a very good argument for getting the parking into the car parks and using the streets for entertainment, for dining out and so on.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Which needs to come first, the car parks ...

The Connétable of St. Helier:

The car parks, clearly, yes.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

The car parks have got to come first?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Yes, and we have gone the other way; we have taken away car parking, so the prospect of increased pedestrian priority, until we provide the car parking, is going to be very, very, difficult to sell.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

What is your answer to the Minister for Transport and Technical Services when we suggest to him that we need more car parks and he says ...

The Connétable of St. Helier:

The space.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Not only is there space, but the strategic transport policy says that I must get people on to public transport and out of cars, and by providing extra car parking space, I am encouraging people to drive into town, which is not what my strategy says.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Yes, and certainly I have got a reputation - I have always had it - for being anti-car, although I have 3 cars and a motorbike and I do drive quite a lot. I enjoy the convenience of the motorcar and when you have got a boat to get to and you have got kids to chauffeur around, there is not an alternative. I think the aspiration is very good and it is certainly right to get more people cycling, because every cyclist is a space freed up in a car park, so one should ...

The Deputy of St. Martin:

What should take priority, stimulating, maintaining and trying to expand the retail offering in St. Helier or the Sustainable Transport Policy, because it would appear that the 2 are not hand in hand? There is not joined-up government.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

I think what T.T.S. forgets sometimes is that we have successfully amended the Island Plan and the transport policy, because when they first appeared, those last 2 documents, they were very

anti-car. I placed about 20 amendments to the Island Plan, most of which were about increasing shopper car parking and not penalising people who need to use their cars to go to town. But what we are finding is the new developments the States are planning, for example, the Summerland Rouge Bouillon developments, they keep bringing down the number. The town park extension as well, that is another, the Jersey Gas site ...

[9:30]

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Yes, Jersey Gas.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

These sites really need to have shopper parking provided in them, as well as parking for visitors.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Shopper parking as well as parking for residents?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Absolutely.

Town Centre Manager:

May I come back to you on the comment that was made by the Minister for Transport and Technical Services? He is correct in one thing, there is adequate parking, but only in certain areas, and his own officers have done audits which show that the north of town is very poor on its parking, so the area around the market section is only served by Minden Place. Minden Place is not suitable for purpose. It has got the narrowest parking spots that you have probably got. It is very poor indeed and there is never any availability there. The second point I would make to you is that a few years ago we were able to tell our shoppers as they were coming into St. Helier where parking spaces were available. Those signs are no longer. They were taken down and not replaced, so that when you see people saying: "Oh, there is no parking in St. Helier" it is because they are not aware of where the parking should be. If you pass a sign that says: "Spaces in Pier Road" after 5 times you have passed it, you tend to think: "Yes, there is parking" and yet we are not, firstly, talking about the parking we have, and second, we should be reviewing the paucity in parking in certain areas. As I say, the Minden Place area is definitely needing it. As I say, it is one of the few areas on a Saturday. I think when they did their last survey, there were 2 spaces available. You compare that to the Esplanade, where there was probably 150. You can see where the problem is, so basically we have got ...

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Is parking availability the number one priority when you start to address the whole issue of retail?
Is that the one that comes at the top of the list?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

I think for me there is a slogan that was used about a town in America, which described it as a parking-friendly town, and I thought that is the kind of thing you need to get over to people who live outside town who want to drive in to town at the weekend, is they have got to feel that it is going to be easy. It is not just about the parking, it is also about the congestion. The Minister for Transport and Technical Services will probably say: "If you have more parking, then the congestion will be worse." So it has to go hand in hand with making sure that bus travel into town is attractive and that is not helped by putting up the prices of the buses. I used the bus the other day and I have discovered that the new cards they have brought in, which you would expect in Jersey, instead of being a simple solution, you still have to wait to get a bus ticket when you get on the bus, which is nonsense, because the whole Oyster card policy or procedure is you go in and you just swipe your card. Similarly in Sand Street car park, instead of bringing in a simple pay on foot system, we bring in a system which you need several O levels to understand. What I am saying is ...

The Deputy of St. Martin:

I was going to say, a member of my family complained the other day if you spend 20 minutes trying to find a parking space in Sand Street, you are paying while you are trying to find it, because the computer is ... but I am not going to go there.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

I think it is not just about parking being easy and affordable, it is about getting people into town, whatever the mode of transport, so cycling is incredibly difficult in town. If you are a cyclist that is determined to obey the law, it is very difficult to cycle around St. Helier. You are better off walking, quite honestly.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Very technically put.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

We have moved all over town and mentioned different areas north of town, Rouge Bouillon, all those areas, and Halkett Place where there is an isolated ... one of your big gripes, I think, has been that there is no masterplan set out here. Do you think there needs to be - and it could be part of a retail champion's remit - a masterplan to pick up issues over retail planning, where

residential areas should be, should we be contracting areas of retail into certain ... and moving into residential areas? Do you think there needs to be an overall masterplan for town?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Yes and no. I do not agree that there is not a masterplan, for one thing. The Island Plan is a pretty good masterplan for town. It is very specific in what should be going on in town, and years ago we spent hundreds of thousands of pounds of Willie Millers' Urban Character Appraisal, which is sitting on various dusty shelves being ignored. It is a superb piece of work. We did the North of Town Masterplan. That was £250,000. It has not been implemented because there were problems with the Odeon, and so that has been left to be a wasteland up there, which is a crucial mistake, losing that development, which would have provided a lot of parking up the north of town. So there are lot of strategic documents that have been put together at great expense. Certainly the retail champion should get those off the shelf and should look at them, but I would not support the States or anybody spending another £250,000 on another masterplan, because I think most of the work has been done.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

It exists, it just needs to be brought in?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Yes, it needs to be brought off the shelf and implemented.

The Connétable of St. Ouen:

Do you think Planning would cause too many issues?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

In many ways, Planning is the friend of retail in St. Helier, because if we did not have the planning policies we have had for years, we would be like other places I shall not mention, which have allowed a lot of out of town development, and until the internet, that was the biggest threat to St. Helier's retail, was the development of places ... and people regularly say to me, almost triumphantly: "I never go to St. Helier, because I can get all I need at Les Quennevais." That might please the Constable of St. Brelade, but I almost feel very sorry for these people, because they are equating shopping with just getting products at a good price, and the shopping experience is much bigger than just filling your shopping bag. As I said, it is about meeting people, having a coffee, going out for a meal and basically enjoying the kind of unique ambience that St. Helier has.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

You said a little while back, Simon, you have got 7 different groups around town and you mentioned Colomberie as one of them, but in your submission under: "Review of retail areas of town" you say: "Assistance should be given to retail areas that are no longer relevant."

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Yes, that was Richard. I do not agree with that.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Okay. Can we talk a little bit about the shrinking of the retail centre of St. Helier, the role that Planning are going to have to play?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

I do not support it.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

You do not?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

I think one of the ...

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Do you think it is sustainable then?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

I think one of the joys of shopping in St. Helier - and you compare with St. Peter Port, which is basically a small shopping area on a hillside with a lot of empty shops, St. Helier is built in a basin - and you can wander for a considerable distance finding all kinds of quirky, interesting shops which you will not find in a lot of high streets. That is why we are supporting Colomberie and we are not giving up on Colomberie. If you think of a town like Brighton, I know it has got a much bigger population serving it, Brighton has got an area called the Lanes where you can wander and you find all these kind of artisan ... a lot of artists, a lot of craftspeople working in little shops, because the main town has moved on. I see Colomberie as a kind of Lanes for St. Helier, a place where you will find the people who are selling beads, hair-braiding, all kinds of things, that because the rents will be lower, they can afford to have their shops. In fact, I think Colomberie is fully let at the moment, which is ...

Town Centre Manager:

Yes, can I take a point on Colomberie, because I did make that, and in no way was I referring to Colomberie. I read with horror what was written, what someone said about Colomberie, and it was more or less ... Colomberie is a very vibrant area at the moment. We do not have empty shops. I think we have got one at the most, and that is currently about to be let. It has got a very vibrant traders' association, and in fact, we have got one retailer that tomorrow is celebrating 21 years in Colomberie.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Yes, but we have got submissions from a Colomberie retailer saying that the movement of the financial sector west has reduced his business in Colomberie by 25 per cent in a stroke.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

But you are going to get the police station, and I mentioned that in the debate on the police station, that there are things going up that end of town which will bring back the footfall, increased residential, a lot more residential going into that part of town east of St. Helier, all those people who live in Havre Des Pas who come down through Colomberie. As long as we can sustain Colomberie ... and interestingly, to go back to obstacles, one of the biggest obstacles in getting to Colomberie is that T.T.S. have put a whole lot of black bollards all the way up the pavement, really big ones, because they are worried that people are going to park on the pavements. That might have been a problem 10 years ago when the scheme went in, but I have been trying unsuccessfully to remove physical obstacles, because they are operated by T.T.S., who say that they will not take the bollards out.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Yes, but at the same time, if you are going to increase the residential offering in Colomberie, what you need is more pavements for people to walk on, surely, and we need to keep them safe by putting in bollards to stop people parking.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Absolutely, but the cars are not going to park on the pavements. They would not get up the curbs, for a start. They are huge curbs.

Town Centre Manager:

I think that is a point and we are looking at pavements, but Colomberie, you are forced into the road by a bollard that is supposed to be there to protect you, which is absolutely ridiculous. I think what we should be doing, and I go back to what the Constable said, is we have had some offices shift out and that will affect it there, but they should then be ... and that is what I mean by advance

planning. We should be then saying: "These are no longer sustainable as offices, because that is what E.D.D. are telling us. What are we doing to try and support transferring them to another usage?" Housing would be great. We are talking about a housing shortage, and suddenly we have got all these offices that are no longer useful for one function. Why do we not review it as another one instead of sort of ...

The Deputy of St. Martin:

If I could go back to challenge Simon, what Richard has just said there is what we were trying to get at. Retail is shrinking and we are going to have places that are going to close, they are going to be turned into ... would you agree with me that I think it would be better, if your retail shrinks from 100 per cent to 75 per cent of sales, that you need to shrink the retail centre of town so that everything is always full, so you say: "Here is our centre, it is full" rather than saying: "Here is our centre, but it is only half full or three-quarters full"?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

I think market forces will decide. As long as the rents in Colomberie remain attractive, people who start up, as I say, quirky businesses who can find shop premises out there are going to want to take them on. The real change, as Richard says, is offices that cannot be filled, and I am sure the offices will go to residential. I do not think the retail element of Colomberie needs to suffer, nor in fact the restaurants.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

But we need some co-operation from Planning on this though, do we not? We need some quick movement, change of views. We need to be able to convert from one to the other.

Town Centre Manager:

We have been to see them, and there is no great resistance. They said: "No, look, we agree that if you cannot fill an office ..." but Colomberie is very important, because it does allow retailers an entry into an area that is affordable. Everybody cannot trade in King and Queen Street because of the rental and I ...

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Do you apply those the same to, for example, the top of New Street, the top of Bath Street?

Town Centre Manager:

Yes.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Do you see all those areas being maintained in retail?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Bath Street would have worked if we had not lost the huge opportunity that Le Masuriers had for us, where they were going to put in parking and shopping and possibly a new supermarket next to the town park. That was a tragedy for St. Helier that we lost that opportunity, and I can only hope that it comes back, because that will bring the footfall back into the north of town and the little shops between Le Masuriers' big development, and in fact Rue de Funchal as well, that whole area - which is very blighted at the moment - it needs Le Masuriers to get the kind of permissions they need and then it will just be a shot in the arm for that part of town.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

I am sure you would agree we would need some more parking in that area to encourage people to start their journey there and migrate from there down into town through them.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Absolutely, yes.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Just on Colomberie, do you seek to improve that area doing something similar that they are doing in St. Ouen at the moment, which in Broad Street is a sort of a shared space with the car, so that it is comfortable for pedestrians, because it is not particularly comfortable for pedestrians coming down Colomberie at the present time. Do you see promoting it in that type of way, working with T.T.S. to have more a comfortable pedestrian experience walking down Colomberie?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

You could certainly in the longer term, but as we said earlier, you are not going to get that kind of shared space or even pedestrian priority until there is significant car parking. If you could start your journey at Green Street ... and we know the car parking at Green Street is going to be tight because of the police station. Maybe if Snow Hill had more car parking, but there needs to be somewhere up there that you can leave your car and walk down Colomberie, and then it is really then a matter of reducing the through traffic to allow more shared space.

Town Centre Manager:

But you are correct with regard to pavements. We have not analysed the pavements and the utilisation. If we just move slightly off from Colomberie to Conway Street, Conway Street is now experiencing a 30 per cent increase in footfall and what we find is that if you analyse Conway Street, you have got a wide pavement and a narrow pavement. If I were to tell you that 75 per cent of the people use the narrow pavement because that is the side they want to be, so we have got one pavement that is not fit for purpose and one that is over-engineered. It is very important

than when you get into town it is a very comfortable walking experience, and I totally agree with you. I think purely and simply if you were to remove the bollards in that area of Colomberie, you would be amazed how much more comfortable you would feel and you would not be dodging around a bollard, walking in the road, thinking: "Oh, is that a bus coming down?" and so on. You can do some quite simple things. For example, if we move back to Conway Street, if you extended the pavement by 2 feet on one side, suddenly you are giving the people the pavement walking area they want if you took the bollards off. We are not talking about rocket science here. I am only a simple retailer and I can sort of work it out, you know? I think if we were to do that, it is all about being comfortable from the time you get into town, which includes your parking experience - and we alluded to that - to the time you go out and it is a nice experience and it is not dodging around obstacles that are created.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

But is one of the problems in Colomberie not the cars that stop and the vans that stop that create a problem in the first place?

Town Centre Manager:

No. I go up there a lot and I would say the reason that originally there was a lot of cars that stopped there was that in the early 1990s there was a video rental and we were all hiring videos. I was guilty, our kids would pop in and we would hope that they would come back with something firstly suitable, and secondly, within the 2 minutes so that we did not get done. That has changed now and it is a different environment and there is a very comfortable loading bay up down by Les Jongleurs and they can use Snow Hill, and there is not a great deal of that. I am very comfortable about that area and it has got a simple solution. If I had a saw big enough, I would go down and create it.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

It took about 2 years. There were some cycle stands as you walk up the King Street/Queen Street and you get to Les Jongleurs. T.T.S. had put a line of cycle stands, effectively a barrier towards going up Colomberie, and we said: "Can you move the cycle stands?"

[9:45]

They said: "No, we cannot, because we want to encourage cyclists into town." "Yes, but not there." There was literally a physical barrier that you had to walk around to get up Colomberie, and finally - and it has taken 2 years - we have got them to remove, I think, 3 of the cycle stands so that there is now a clear pedestrian line up into Colomberie.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

So we made the case, I think, for a bit more joined-up Government when it comes to retail.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

I would just like the Parishes to have more delegated power over these kind of issues. It is nonsense for central Government to be worrying about where cycle stands go. That should be a matter the parochial authorities are responsible for.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Let us change the subject ever so slightly. We have discussed eating, music, entertainment and trying to create experiences for people to come into town to enjoy as well as the shopping, and that leads us conveniently on to the thorny subject of the Central Market. Could I have your views on where you think the Central Market has been, where is it, where it should be going in the future? I will leave it at that and let you go.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

No, it is the jewel in our retail crown, both that and the Fish Market. It is still, for a lot of people, their favourite place to go and choose their meat and their veg and their cheese, but I think most people would agree that it is an under-utilised space. There are a number of reasons why that is, certainly the fact that it is closed on one of the busiest shopping afternoons of the week does not help, that it is closed in the evenings, and Richard is perhaps better placed to talk about the kind of markets he has seen that make much more use of these kind of covered spaces. It currently sits with ... it has moved around a bit. I think it sits with Property Holdings now. Again, we are talking about silos, because in any town of this size, 30,000 people, the local authority would operate the market. I have said on several occasions that the Parish would be quite happy to talk to Treasury about taking over administration of the market, and we would have the kind of liaison with the market traders that really has not existed for a long time between Government and the people who ... there have been a lot of arguments about rental, about payments and so on, and it is the kind of function that belongs in the parochial setting, I think, and I would certainly want to see the market used in the evenings, at the weekends. I would certainly like to see it open on Thursday afternoons. I opposed the loss of the Post Office. It was one of the great drivers of people into the Central Market. We have lost that now.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Do you think in the rejuvenation of the Central Market you are talking about just a medium-sized revamp or are we talking about a complete rebranding and rip it all out, let us redesign, let us get the whole thing ...

Town Centre Manager:

Can I come in, first of all? I am a retailer, a very simple retailer, and there are certain basics within retailing that are not achieved in the market. The first thing is you should know where the market is, and if you stand on the junction of King and Queen Streets and look down, there is no signage to say that the market is there, so if you are a visitor to the town, you would not see it. All you would need was a sign that would go down which would say: "Jersey Markets" and so on. That is the first thing. Any retailer would make sure that you know where their shop is, that was part of it, and you will see that everyone has got signs. There is no sign. You go down to the market and you look outside and there is a sign that tells you what sort of shops there are. Half of those shops no longer exist. You have got the dairy in there and everything on that sign. What I believe is that the market should have the same retail standards as you would expect in any other retail area, and that is a very simple thing that you could do pretty quickly, you know, achieve.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

The ability to react quickly I think is what Simon was trying to say, it is better done through the Parish than it is through Property Holdings or anything like that.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

I do not believe that the person in charge of the market is even based in the market any more, which again is ... I do not exactly know what they do, but we went to Rennes Market for their food festival, and they had the equivalent of MasterChef being done in their market, so they had the finalist in their local competition, which that year was mackerel, and everyone had been involved. They had lots of Michelin chefs, Michelin judges came in, and they had the T.V. (television) in there, and the market was the hub of this experience, where the finalists were cooking and being interviewed and then they got their awards. It is a great space for that kind of event and it could be reconfigured to allow those kind of events to take place.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

When you say administration from the Parish, are you talking purely about the day-to-day running of it, not the rental side? You would leave that ...

The Connétable of St. Helier:

I think it would depend how much they wanted to ... again, I am surprised that central Government in Jersey seems to want to hang on to all the micro-management, which would normally anywhere else be done by local government.

The Connétable of St. Ouen:

It has been suggested that to draw people to it, entertainment and so on should be done there. Do you think there is an opening for that?

Town Centre Manager:

Absolutely. If I had to control the market ... the most photographed area of the market is the fountain. That fountain is a beautiful thing and it is replicated, funnily enough, in a market in Ireland, but never mind. If you have a look at it, it is not decorated, but that would be a natural area to create an entertainment area or a change area. So what I would say is that would it not be nice to have different things going on in the market every day so there would be a reason for you going in? It could well be that there is a cookery demonstration one day, it could be the Musician of the Year from Jersey is going to perform another day or it could even be that we have ad hoc other stalls so that you could maybe have a vintage stall in there one day and so on, so that you get away from the sameness, because you have talked about it, and entertainment, shopping has got to be more than shopping, it has got to be a reason, an event to go in there. What you say is absolutely 100 per cent correct. It should be a vibrant area you go in. One of the major training tools that are used by all major banks, bizarrely enough, is Seattle Fish Market, and they go and show how you can make theatre out of a very, very dull thing, and there is these fishmongers chucking fish here, there and everything, and that is what markets are all about. They are a unique thing, and I think in St. Helier we have got the most beautiful-looking market and we should put everything into making sure that that beauty is reflected in the vibrancy that goes in there.

The Connétable of St. Ouen:

We have been reminded this morning that there are 2 stalls or areas that are still vacant and have been vacant for some time. Would you know the reasons why that is the case at all?

Town Centre Manager:

No, but I know someone that has been desperate to get in there and has applied, and he said to me yesterday: "I have even tried plan B and sent my wife in to see if I can get in there." The person I am talking about has a unique offering, was able to go in there, and I find it a great sadness that we have got stalls empty and there are people that want to go in there, and this affects the other traders. The other traders, they do not want an empty stall there because they want their place to be vibrant, and I do not think we are being fair on the market traders, personally.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

What about the Fish Market? We are speaking about the Central Market, but where are you with the movement of the Fish Market to the Central Market or the continuation of the separation? The

use of the Telecom car park has been suggested to us for other things, a pedestrian priority zone in Kettle Street. How do you feel about that?

Town Centre Manager:

My personal feeling is that the Central Market is a priority. The Central Market is the number one thing, and if we could go back to retailing terms, the Central Market is the ground floor of my retail shop. The Fish Market, if you like, is the first floor. If you have a look at anybody and if you look at any of our departmental stores, they make sure that their ground floor is perfect. I think we should do that and then we should review what is happening in the Fish Market. I think it is very sad that we have got empty stalls and there have been a long time in the Fish Market. We have to come up to a solution, but maybe - and the Constable alluded to this before - are we talking about market forces telling us what we should be doing in the Fish Market? I think what we should do is just concentrate on the main one. I am not looking for an agreement with regard to what I am saying, but I think we have got yet another stall moving out of the Fish Market, so we are not talking about one, we are talking about 2.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Because it goes without saying if Minden Place Car Park was twice the size and we rejuvenated the Central Market, the Fish Market will benefit, because most people would walk through the Fish Market to get to the Central Market.

Town Centre Manager:

The other thing is that there is the ability to eat fish in the Fish Market, and it may be that that will become stronger. There may be fewer fish retailers and perhaps more places to eat fish. I am pleased that they are investing in the Fish Market. It is the sort of thing we heard about after it happened, but you get used to that in Jersey life. But I agree that the Telecom car park is a terribly under-used resource. It is a beautiful little space, and again that could be used for all kinds of things.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Was that the site of the original open-air Fish Market there?

Town Centre Manager:

I am not sure, but it could be used. It has got a very majestic entrance. You could use it for open-air, all kinds of things.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

But just going back to signs, because we are starting to get close to our time ...

The Connétable of Grouville:

Just can I ask about that stall in the main market that is not let and yet you seem to think that there is a willing person to take it on? What is the reason that seems ...

Town Centre Manager:

We do not have any control of it, and I am totally unaware of that. We do not have any control over the market. It is controlled by E.D.D. and so on and it is Property Holdings.

The Connétable of Grouville:

It seems remarkable that there is a stall and that somebody wants to take it on and it has not happened.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

We have Deputy Noel with us in not too long, so it will be fresh in our minds to quiz him on why that situation is occurring. I would like to just go back to signs before we finish. Is signage a St. Helier Parish responsibility or is it a T.T.S. responsibility or is there again no one co-ordinator?

Town Centre Manager:

We are currently working on signs.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

It is being dealt with.

Town Centre Manager:

Currently we have what we call Centre Ville signs, which are those red ones with the sort of maps on, which when the French tourists look, you can see it is quite like a French farce. They look, they scratch their head, they try and work it out. They are totally illegible. When you do drive down, they have got Woolworths quite strongly featured, which has been out of the town for 5 years, so we are working to replace all the centreve signage. This is very much a tourist thing, and we are working with the tourism sector trying to get the signage uniform from the harbour down through to the town centre, remove those and have appropriate maps. We are working on the signs that they use in London. I do not know if you are aware of those, but they are very clear, tell you where you are and so on, because it is their main operation, but the trouble is, technology is moving on. One of the things that we are trying to consider is a lot of these signs are now used electronically, because so many people put their smart phones against them, they can then get the information. We want to make sure that that is being done, and we only had a meeting this week with Woodhouse, who supply a lot of the signs in Central London, and they are telling us about what you can do. One of the other things you can do with these signs is you can put Bluetooth

connectivity into it, so suddenly you can become totally connected to the internet through the whole town. Tunbridge Wells are experimenting with this; they want to be the first total internet town. But that would be another U.S.P. (Unique Selling Point) which would be great, so we are looking at that sort of possibility as well, to integrate signs, because signs are slightly more than what they used to be when I was a boy, if you know what I mean.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

That project appears to be cutting across departmental boundaries. Certainly Planning, E.D., working with Richard, we are seeing the fruits of that work, so it is possible to see co-operation. It is just a pity we cannot see that replicated in some of the other areas that we have been talking about.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

I have only got one word left, or 2 words: Hoppa bus. There has been some discussion as to whether a Hoppa bus from the residential areas around the outskirts of town into St. Helier would be of great benefit to retail.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

It is an unfulfilled pledge. I met the new chairman, I think, of the new bus company when he came to Jersey and one of the first things I said to him is: "As soon as you have got your regular routes in place, will you look at the possibility of a town Hoppa bus?" Not just for residents, though it is important for them to get into town, but for people coming to our ferry terminal, who are stranded, I do not know whether it is half a mile a third of a mile away from the town centre, and left to walk through that kind of slightly industrial landscape from the terminal. The Hoppa bus ought to be picking up people off the ferries, particularly the French coming into the Albert Quay, and it should be working around Pier Road car park, because that, as we know, is empty most of the time. If you could park in Pier Road for half the price of the other car parks and you knew there would be a Hoppa bus into town, then I think we would see much greater use of it. So the Hoppa bus is a key element in improving access to town and it is terribly overdue. We had a trial, I do not know, some 6 years ago, and it was very successful. It is time Liberty Bus got on with it, and if they need funding from T.T.S., T.T.S. should prioritise funding instead of spending it on the things that they think are important, which we do not always agree with some of their projects. We heard this morning that there is a £20 million underspend. Let us have a Hoppa bus service. Why can the Minister for Treasury not get on with it and release the funding so that that key element of town transport can be provided?

Town Centre Manager:

We did have a meeting, did we not, and we agreed a route for a bus which would stop outside the market and the library and allow that natural progression around town. One of the ideas that came from the Central Market, one of the traders there said that we should just buy 2 Disney buses that they had to shuttle to and from Disney and have it going around the town. I do not think that is a bad idea, when you think about it, and maybe we could suddenly then utilise areas like Pier Road so that that car park then is more attractive, because one of the arguments about Pier Road is: "I cannot get to it" but if you could then pop on a Hoppa bus and get taken straight to the town centre ... I know it is not that far. I can see you smiling, but that is the perception, I hate to say it.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

I know. I park in Pier Road and I know all the excuses.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Can I just ask one question? It is slightly off at a bit of a tangent, but in terms of licensing and alcohol within St. Helier, especially on a Saturday, do you think some of our drinking habits and how licences have been handled over the last few years has had a detrimental effect on people coming into St. Helier.?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

I think that is more of an issue for the hospitality sector and the evening economy. I am not sure the impact on retail is that great, because of course retail tends to have finished its work. It does not help that perception of St. Helier as a place that is unsafe, and it is worth mentioning the proactive approach of the new Chief Officer of the States of Jersey Police personally being in town to tackle miscreants, but we are seeing far more police in town during the day, during the afternoon, where we used to have a lot of trouble with anti-social behaviour, and that is really helping retail, because they really need to know that the town is a safe place for their shoppers and so I take my hat off to the Police Service for the work they are doing.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Has it also had a positive effect on younger people as well, because there was obviously the skateboard crowd that people think are a nuisance around town?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Yes, I think so.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I think that has had a positive effect.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Yes, so that has been a good news story for us.

Town Centre Manager:

It has also reflected on the losses that the retailers have experienced. At the moment, they are experiencing a very low level of losses in comparison with what has happened previously, so I think it reflects ...

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

There is a lot less shoplifting.

Town Centre Manager:

Yes, that is what we call shrinkage, as you probably know, and the shrinkage is at a very low level.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

We are not going to go near C.C.T.V. (Closed-Circuit Television). Constable, I know you are a busy man. Can I thank you both very much for your time this morning?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Thank you.

[10:01